

Gravel Root and Powder Profile

Also known as

Eupatorium purpureum, Gravelweed, Joe-Pye Weed, Jopi Weed, Kidney Root, Purple Boneset, Queen-of-the-Meadow Root, and Trumpet Weed.

Introduction

Gravel root is a native of the North American continent, growing from southern Canada through Florida, mostly in wet, wooded areas. Native American culture has a long history using gravel root. It was used to treat colds and fevers, and as a wash for joint pain. It was also considered an aphrodisiac. It was said that if you tucked a leaf into your check, it would ensure that any words spoken to the opposite sex would be well received. It is very often referred to as Joe Pye weed, or Sweet Joe Pye weed. As legend has it, Joe Pye was a Native American who used gravel root to help cure an outbreak of typhoid. Why the "sweet" part is sometimes attached seems to be a mystery to this day. It has often been considered a good luck charm among many American folks, many gamblers carry parts of the plant on them for good luck. It is also one of the integral ingredients in a mojo bag. It was used largely to treat urinary problems, especially kidney stones, or gravel. It is also used in traditional medicine to reduce fever, increase urination, and induce sweating to break a fever and as a general tonic during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Constituents

volatile oils

Parts Used

Root

Typical Preparations

As tea, in capsules and as an extract

Summary

The Iroquois called a decoction of gravel root "little medicine water" because of its healing properties. The herb is a diuretic, astringent, anti-inflammatory and febrifuge. It may be used to ease urination in cases where kidney stones are present, and can help relieve edema associated with gout and rheumatism. The tea may help break a fever by encouraging sweating, and is often used to treat diseases of the urogenital tract. Other Native American uses have included relieving constipation, washing wounds with a strong tea made from the root to prevent infection and as a general tonic taken during pregnancy and after childbirth. PLEASE NOTE! The internal use while pregnant was historically practiced by native peoples and its current use while pregnant is not recommended.

Precautions

Not recommended while pregnant. It should not be used in the long term as it may cause damage to the liver or kidneys.

Botanical: Eupatorium purpureum (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Compositae

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---**Synonyms**---Trumpet-weed. Gravelweed. Joe-pye Weed. Jopi Weed. Queen-of-the-Meadow Root. Purple Boneset. Eupatorium purpureum, trifoliatum, and maculatum. Eupatorium verticillatum. Eupatorium ternifolium. Hempweed.

---**Part Used**---Fresh root.

---**Habitat**---Is indigenous to North America, and common from Canada to Florida, growing in swampy and rich low grounds, where it blossoms throughout the summer months.

---**Description**---This species varies greatly in form and foliage, the type being very tall and graceful.

The stem is rigidly erect, usually about 5 or 6 feet high, though sometimes even reaching a height of 12 feet, and is stout, unbranched and either hollow, or furnished with an incomplete pith. It is purple above the joints and often covered with elongated spots and lines (this variety having been called *maculata* by Linnaeus). The leaves, oblong and pointed, rough above, but downy beneath, are placed in whorls of four or five on the stem (mostly in fives) and are nearly destitute of resinous dots. The margins are coarsely and unequally toothed, the leafstalks either short or merely represented by the contracted bases of the leaves. The flowers are purple, in a dense terminal inflorescence, the heads very numerous, five to ten flowered, contained in an eight-leaved, fresh-coloured involucre.

It grows in low, swampy ground. There are over forty species of the genus, many of which are used medicinally. The name is derived from a king of Pontus, Mithridates Eupator, who first used the plant as a remedy, and the popular name of Jopi or Joe-pye is taken from an American Indian who cured the typhus with it.

The taste is aromatic, astringent, and bitter.

The roots should be collected in the autumn.

---**Constituents**---The chief constituent is Euparin. It is yellow, neutral, and crystalline, and received the formula $C_{12} = H_{11} = O_3$.

Eupurpurin, a so-called oleoresin, has been precipitated from a tincture of the drug.

A tincture and a fluid extract are prepared.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Diuretic, nervine. Formerly the use of this purpleflowered Boneset was very similar to that of the ordinary Boneset. It is especially valuable as a diuretic and stimulant as

well as an astringent tonic, and is considered a valuable remedy in dropsy, strangury, gravel, hematuria, gout and rheumatism, exerting a special influence upon chronic renal and cystic troubles.

---Preparations---Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm. Eupatorin, 3 to 5 grains.